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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC-01263/87
24 March 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Robert E. Blackwell
National Intelligence Officer for USSR

SUBJECT: March Warning and Forecast Report

1. Our entire meeting this month was devoted to the recent Soviet decision to delink INF from the rest of the Reykjavik package. The key questions addressed are listed below.

2. Are the Soviets Serious About Reaching An INF Agreement?

A majority of the community believes that the Gorbachev regime has good political, economic and military reasons to conclude an INF agreement, that it wants to sign an agreement with this administration, and that it is not going to let US demands on verification and shorter range systems block such an accord. NIO/USSR concurs and expects that the Soviets will use the forthcoming visit of Secretary Shultz to push hard for an INF Treaty. One person argued that the record of the last six years supports an interpretation that Moscow's seeming interest in arms control is not aimed at reaching agreement but principally for the purpose of political manipulation.

3. What Was The Soviet Political Calculus Behind the Decision to Delink?

A. Discussion: CIA led off the discussion by noting that the bulk of the reporting indicates the decision to delink was part of a broader policy decision to continue dealing with the present US administration, lest 2-4 more years go by without any meaningful agreement on arms control. They decided to move on INF rather than in START or DST because the points at issue in INF appear to be the easiest to resolve, the Soviet decision to link INF to SDI was always tactical and therefore reversible, and relinking INF to SDI was hurting rather than helping Moscow's campaign to gain West European support for its arms control initiatives. The Soviets know time is running out; if a deal is to be reached and ratified before the end of this Administration, they had to move soon.

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They also wanted to move before NATO completed deployment of all 572 INF missiles at the end of 1988. Moscow may have known about and desired to preempt the positive reaction likely to ensue when the US submitted its own draft INF treaty. Finally, the Soviets may have been anxious to take the measure of the new team at the White House; reporting suggests Moscow thinks the recent personnel changes there and at the Pentagon improve the prospects for an agreement.

DIA mentioned other factors which may also have figured in Moscow's calculus: Gorbachev probably thought that moving now would increase the prospects that the US would continue to adhere to a narrow interpretation of the ABM treaty, that the Dutch would delay deployment and that an INF accord would contribute to the nuclear decoupling of Europe from the US. State/INR added that planning for the 13th Five Year Plan begins soon and Gorbachev probably hopes that an INF treaty will allow him to get more political leverage over SDI in the future, protecting his investment in domestic revitalization.

How do the Soviets plan to handle short-range INF and verification? On the former, the evidence is mixed and policy seems in flux, but [REDACTED] Moscow will agree to a complete ban on SS-12 and SS-23 short-range ballistic missiles rather than permit a US build-up to current Soviet levels. On verification, statements by some officials suggest that Moscow will trump us with a proposed regime so intrusive that we would never be able to buy it.

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What [REDACTED] Soviets will relink if the US opts for a broad interpretation of the ABM treaty? CIA/SOVA thinks this unlikely; if Moscow retaliates, it most likely will toughen its position in START.

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B. Warning: Gorbachev may use Prime Minister Thatcher's forthcoming visit to the USSR to surface some new initiative on the Defense and Space issue, such as formally indicating that the USSR could live with a narrow interpretation of the ABM Treaty and/or new proposals for limiting testing in space.

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4. What are the Military Pros and Cons of an Agreement?

A. Discussion: The community concurred in DIA's assessment of how Moscow probably views the military costs and benefits of an INF agreement. From the Soviet military's point of view, the major

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drawbacks to concluding an agreement are the fact that the Soviet capability to deliver a massed nuclear strike against theater nuclear targets with ballistic missiles is degraded, that some potential replacements for the SS-20 are less accurate and inflict more collateral damage than the SS-20 and that having a smaller number of warheads to cover the same number of targets reduces redundancy and--consequently--confidence in overall kill prospects in theater conflict. In securing the removal of P-IIs from Europe, however, the Soviets remove a major threat to their National Command Authority and increase confidence in their own capability to launch on tactical warning (LOTW). They also remove any threat of a P-II follow-on. The estimated 1850 Soviet targets in Western Europe, which require anywhere from 600-1,000 weapons, can be hit using a combination of SS-11s, SS-19s, and SS-17s operating at reduced ranges; Backfire bombers; and Yankee-class submarines. Having to resort to multiple systems to cover target sets previously covered entirely by missiles gives both sides more time to consider a resort to tactical nuclear conflict. On balance, therefore, the Community believes the Soviets judge that the military benefits of a Zero-Zero INF agreement outweigh the costs.

DIA noted that we are much less certain about Soviet theater nuclear targeting objectives in Asia. We know that from 1970-77 there were no medium-range or intermediate-range ballistic missiles targeted at Western and Chinese forces in the Far East, although a large number of SS-11s were capable of striking targets in the region. It seems possible that in the interest of improving relations with China and Japan (as well as simplifying the verification regime), the Soviets might be prepared to agree to a global INF ban.

B. Warning: Our confidence in our ability to verify an INF accord will not be very high unless we are able to reach agreement with the Soviets on baseline figures for the existing SS-20 force, and on procedures for dismantling and destruction.

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In addition, from a verification perspective, a global agreement requiring destruction of all missiles and launchers and the associated facilities which support them throughout the USSR is preferable to a zero-100 agreement, because so long as the Soviets maintain any SS-20 facilities there will be concern that they are covertly maintaining equipment and training people to prepare for an SS-20 breakout.

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5. Foreign Reactions to an INF Accord

A. Discussion. Judging from discussion of a presentation by State/INR, the community believes that our European allies grudgingly support an INF accord along the lines currently envisioned. They are concerned that it will encourage nuclear decoupling and worried about intrusive verification and the potential imbalance in short-range systems that will remain. Privately, European leaders--especially the French--are concerned about the long term ramifications of a zero-zero deal, but they don't think we have any choice but to forge ahead. The Europeans see Gorbachev's initiative as important, but not as a great concession (since in large measure it is simply a restoration of the position they had taken before Reykjavik.) They have grave doubts that we will ever be able to agree on deployment of our own short-range systems and thus see little leverage to use on the Soviets in follow-on talks on these systems. The Chinese continue to show ambivalence about the prospects of an accord, dissociating themselves from both US and Soviet positions, replaying French concerns in their own media, and complaining that it is unfair to go to zero in Europe while keeping 100 missiles in Asia. They continue to demand deep cuts across the board by both superpowers as an earnest of their good intentions on arms control.

B. Warning. Immediate allied concerns have focused on verification provisions and the short-range systems imbalance. But as it sinks in that a zero-zero INF arrangement could lead Soviets to rely more on intercontinental systems for theater targets we may see increasing pressures from European capitals for movement in the START negotiations--and hence for efforts to find some common ground with Moscow on SDI. Negotiating the basic outlines of verification provisions for an INF accord with the Europeans was surprisingly easy, but implementing the principles could prove to be more difficult. While agreeing in principle to on-site inspections, for example, they could bargain hard on the maximum number of annual inspections to be allowed.

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